

NRC helping CIA on Arctic snoop

By Colin MacKenzie

Citizen Staff Writer

A hush-hush branch of the National Research Council based at the Confederation Heights government building complex in Ottawa has been eavesdropping on Russians in the Soviet north for the past 20 years.

Information is channelled from radar stations in the Canadian North to the communications branch in the Sir Leonard Tilley Building at Riverside Drive and Heron Road.

The CBC, which presented an hour-long program on the subject Wednesday night says the branch has been listening to Soviet radio communications as part of Canada's contribution to a four-power agreement.

Canada, said Winslow Peck, a former American intelligence officer, has responsibility for "a certain part

of Europe" and the polar regions.

Several hundred people work in the Confederation Heights building which is surrounded by barbed wire and has electrically controlled gates.

They sift through the mass of routine Russian-language communications which then have to be translated, gleaned anything which might be significant, economically, politically, or militarily.

The information is passed to, among others, the Central Intelligence Agency, just outside Washington, and British intelligence.

The CBC said links are close between the two countries, involving CIA officers attached to the American embassy here and Canadian intelligence experts working out of the Canadian embassy in Washington.

The man identified as the chief CIA man in Ottawa, Cleveland Cram said he is "an assistant to the ambassador and an officer in the political section," while his opposite number, in Washington RCMP Insp. Harry Brandes said it was "nonsense" to say he is involved with espionage.

The RCMP in Ottawa said today, however, that Insp Brandes is in Washington to liaise with other intelligence agencies.

Mr. Peck said that although Canada, Great Britain and Australia all provide information to the U.S., not as much information is returned.

He also said the Americans monitor all communications within the other three countries, as well as their diplomatic messages.

Mr. Peck said it is done for "security reasons," and that he didn't know if the other countries realized how extensive the eavesdropping has become.

NRC officials in Ottawa were not available for comment today. The Canadian embassy in Washington would only say that an NRC employee is attached to the embassy.

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